

From: Kaku, Melvin N
To: Hamayasu, Toru
CC: Fasi, Gina; Torres, Richard F
Sent: 12/4/2006 2:06:17 PM
Subject: FW: Light rail transit corridor

Redacted

-----Original Message-----

From: Quintal, Sidney A
Sent: Monday, December 04, 2006 9:02 AM
To: Ito, Char
Cc: Kaku, Melvin N
Subject: FW: Light rail transit corridor

Redacted

-----Original Message-----

From: Ken Hughes [mailto:kenhughes@hughesdevelopmentlp.com]
Sent: Saturday, December 02, 2006 2:43 PM
To: Quintal, Sidney A
Subject: Light rail transit corridor

Dear Sid:

In honor of your comment that the mayor gets many unqualified responses to the rail routes, but not many meaningful suggestions, I have the following to offer. In part, keep in mind that I have developed on a transit station and know the huge increase in property values at a station.

I have reviewed all the alternative analysis proposals. I am perplexed that Parsons Brinkerhoff have not identified "my solution", but here it is.

First, I think that there is a very good, available connector solution for commuter rail from West Oahu along the old sugar train r.o.w. I have had no motivation to drive out and look at what happens to it as it approaches IH 1, but it is clear that there is substantial agricultural land that will allow it to reach IH1. Once there, then the new light rail line could have a connecting station with an elevated route along the median of 1 to the merge and the on into the city. The commuter rail can be diesel powered along the surface route to its merger with IH1. There is plenty of used, but refurbishable rolling stock that could make that very affordable.

The new system would connect somewhere with a station west of the merge. Then, light rail would go into downtown and on to UH. I think that a creative architectural design to the infrastructure along the median of the freeway will be easily constructable and the least invasive of environmental issues. It won't take over existing neighborhoods who, rightfully, should object to an overhead transit incursion.

The great thing about the way that the freeway is now positioned is that density has naturally occurred next to it. The easiest way to consider serving the residential base is to follow

that. Further, with creative design, it could be a "Hawaii" model of how to do this well.

There is a lot of precedent all over the country for using the freeway as a rail r.o.w. effectively. That would include, for example, the DC area, Chicago, Pasadena, Los Angeles, and others. Incidentally, one benefit to cozying up to a freeway is that everyone in the traffic "parking lot" during rush hour is observing the trains going by without interruption!

You have a very successful bus system. That system knows how to provide good pneumatic tire vehicles to anywhere, and that makes for a good understand of shuttle systems from the rail to the edges of the corridor the rail serves. It is a no-brainer to have this capability at a downtown station that will serve the CBD easily with little investment.

There could be a number of alternatives if Hawaii was not so opposed to overhead wiring (i.e., catenaries, in the rail world). But, given that, if the solution is more of a Vancouver one with a third rail, then the intrusion of the guideway into adjacent neighborhoods can be a problem. Personally, I don't like elevated transit systems. As in most cities that have them, they are not a "feature" but a dividing line that is not what one would want in Honolulu.

As to the starter line success, I don't think the serving the downtown waterfront and Ala Moana Shopping Center produces any added benefit to the island. The best benefit to an expensive mass transit system is to connect far-flung residential, work force housing to the job locations. Unless I am missing something, connecting the middle-class neighborhoods Ewa of downtown along the freeway system to an educational anchor such as the University of Hawaii Manoa Campus is financially, culturally and otherwise an easy pick for me.

I will add that the computer files on the web site on the type of structures used to elevate the system are as counterintuitive to the "Hawaii sense of place" as anything I have seen. If the proposed system has a good chance of acceptance by the general population, then images like that from engineers, and not architects, will be a major deterrent to the goal of rail transit for Honolulu. Rail is a very good idea for this city. It has the density and demographic background that would suggest it can be very effective. But, running a big, heavy concrete overhead along the edge of the waterfront or through existing residential neighborhoods and through downtown will neither be popular, or more importantly, will not serve the center of population.

Now, let me remove the self-serving potential of this diatribe!. As the developer of Pacific Quay, I have no problem of the adjacency of the rail to that project. It could be a good talking point for us to have it there. But, looking very objectively at the Honolulu opportunity, that is not where it should be. One half of its potential market is underwater, and fish don't use mass transit. Secondly, connecting west Oahu with a shopping center makes no sense to me. While there are entertainment venues along the way, the primary objective of the system should be to connect residences with jobs. The more mauka route of the freeway does that.

So, that is my two cents worth. I hope that you will know that I understand the hard decisions that the Mayor and the council will have to take in order to come to a reasonable conclusion. But, this is my offering as, I think, a qualified observer of these systems and one who has taken a big financial bet on being on transit.

Warm regards,

Ken